

The Department of Commerce (DOC), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is issuing a Broad Agency Announcement to solicit proposals addressing a number of research topics related to Northeast fisheries. These include ecological relationships as they relate to rebuilding stocks, commercial and recreational bycatch and discard issues, and socioeconomic data on the recreational fisheries. Research projects that develop and implement strategies for enhancing safety at sea and industry-led training for public sector employees on commercial fishery practices will also be considered. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Northeast Regional Office (NERO), Cooperative Research Partners Initiative (CRPI) in consultation with the Research Steering Committee of the New England Fishery Management Council identified these research topics. A web site has been established to provide public access to the BAA package at <http://coopresearch.nero.noaa.gov>. Questions regarding proposal submission may be addressed via e-mail to Michelle.R.Morales@noaa.gov and shall reference this announcement. Only research proposals submitted by **July 11, 2005** will be considered. Only Contracting Officers are legally authorized to commit the government to an award under this announcement. Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Minority Serving Institutions are encouraged to apply. This action is unrestricted. The applicable NAICS is 541710, Research and Development in the Physical, Engineering, and Life Sciences. The size standard is 500 employees. All potential offerors are reminded that prior to the award of any contract the offeror shall possess a valid Dun and Bradstreet Number (DUN), Tax Identification Number (TIN), and be registered in the Central Contractor Registration (CCR) database. Questions on this announcement should be submitted in writing to Michelle Morales at Michelle.R.Morales@noaa.gov.

BROAD AGENCY ANNOUNCEMENT COOPERATIVE RESEARCH PARTNERS INITIATIVE (CRPI)

A. INTRODUCTION: The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Northeast Regional Office (NERO), Cooperative Research Partners Initiative (CRPI), is seeking research proposals for projects that involve cooperation between fisheries managers, scientists, and industry. This BAA is issued under the provisions of paragraph 6.102(d)(2) of the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR), which provides for the competitive selection of basic and applied research proposals. Contracts awarded, based on responses to this BAA, are considered to be the result of full and open competition and in full compliance with the provisions of Public Law 98-396, "The Competition in Contracting Act of 1984." A web site has been established at <http://www.nero.noaa.gov> to provide public access to the BAA package. A new BAA may be posted following expiration of this submittal period in support of any additional or continuing agency needs.

B. BACKGROUND:

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Northeast Regional Office (NERO), Cooperative Research Partners Initiative (CRPI), in cooperation with the Research Steering Committee (RSC) of the New England Fishery Management Council, anticipates that up to approximately \$1 million will be available for proposals addressing several research topics for cooperative research. NMFS may award up to twenty projects under this announcement. A BAA published in February 2004 announced the availability of CRPI funds in the amount of \$1.8 million to develop fishing gear and practices to increase options for using limited days-at-sea in the New England multispecies groundfish industry. Twenty-one proposals were submitted and seven were recommended for funding. Federal support ranged from \$33,100 to \$440,000, with an average Federal funding level of \$255,030. The topics for the 2005 solicitation, in no priority order, are listed below. No research proposals outside these areas shall be considered.

1. Research on topics relevant to ecosystem based fisheries management. As an example, research could consider ecological relationships between fish stocks, including predator/prey and competitive relationships with a focus on the evaluation of whether the stock status of other species is slowing the rebuilding of groundfish stocks.
2. Research on fishing practices or gear modifications that may change the ratio of component catch species or improve selectivity of gear. As an example, research could consider ways to catch flatfish and not roundfish, or ways to reduce the bycatch of groundfish in the herring fishery. Alternatively, research could focus on gear modifications that would reduce the catch of dogfish or skates in groundfish gear.
3. Research on angler practices that would reduce catch and release mortality in marine recreational fisheries in the Northeast. As an example, research could consider ways to reduce hooking mortality on sub-legal cod or haddock, or ways to target haddock and not cod.

4. Research on the socioeconomic aspects of marine recreational and commercial fisheries in the Northeast. As an example, research could be conducted on angler economic expenditures in the northeast multispecies fishery, or the social cultural aspects of the charter/party boat industry as they relate to the impact of current or proposed fishery management decisions.
5. Research to develop and implement strategies for enhancing safety at sea. As an example, a project could consider ways to identify and publicize safe fishing practices in the commercial and recreational fisheries in the Northeast.
6. A pilot project to develop an industry-led training program, for Federal, State and Fishery Management Council employees, on commercial fishing practices and gear use.
7. Proposals to enhance current capabilities in cooperative research data processing systems that will allow greater adaptability of systems across research programs and improve the timeliness of data delivery. As an example, the existing cod tagging database could be modified to support other northeast tagging programs. A data system training module could be developed to enhance training of field staff from cooperating partner agencies in the use of existing electronic data capture systems.

C. OBJECTIVE:

(1) Technical Description: This BAA solicits research proposals for projects that relate to Northeast fisheries. These include ecological relationships as they relate to the rebuilding of stocks, commercial and recreational bycatch and discard issues, and socioeconomic data on the recreational fisheries for these species. Research projects that develop and implement strategies for enhancing safety at sea will also be considered. Proposals should identify resources that are available to the offerors and list other resources that are requested from the NMFS funding.

On an individual proposal basis, some projects may offset the total cost of the project by incorporating the sale of the catch into the proposal. Offerors must clearly explain their request for retention of the catch including use of days-at-sea (DAS) and accounting for the sale of the catch. If research is to be conducted outside the fishing regulations, an Exempted Fishing Permit may be required (see Section F).

(2) Project Requirements: The objective of these projects is to encourage cooperative research between fisheries managers, scientists, and industry members. Specific activities may vary with each project, but all projects should incorporate the following elements where applicable:

- Administrative and/or other necessary support for the project, include the training and equipping of study personnel for onboard vessel safety where applicable.
- Adequate insurance coverage during research days at sea.
- Adequate communication with NMFS on project progress and accomplishment via interim progress reports (minimum of two); facilitation of project evaluation through site visits

conducted by NMFS project monitors; and submission of a final report in accordance with a schedule negotiated with NMFS. Final reports will be required to pass a critical review and incorporate modifications according to review results before approval and release to the public. Additionally, final reports and all original or raw data shall be provided to NMFS. Access portals may be posted on the NMFS internet web site for public access.

D. PROPOSAL SUBMISSIONS:

Ten copies of each research proposal **must be received by close of business (4:30 p.m.) on Monday, July 11, 2005**. Submit proposals to: Eastern Region Acquisition Division, 200 Granby Street, Suite 815, Attention: Michelle Morales, Norfolk, VA 23510. A technical review panel convened by NMFS will review proposals. Based on this review, NMFS may:

1. Invite the offeror to enter into a negotiation and contracting agreement with NMFS;
2. Fund all or part of the proposal as presented without modifications or negotiations unless the offeror states that a partial award is not acceptable; or
3. Choose not to fund the proposal.

E. PROPOSAL PREPARATION AND FORMAT:

Since this is a competitive solicitation, NOAA employees are not permitted to assist in the preparation of a proposal. Proposals shall include the following at a minimum, but are not limited to these elements. In terms of length, proposals are limited to 15 pages, single spaced, on 8 ½ x 11 inch paper, for items 1-8 below. Items 9 and 10 are not subject to this page limitation. Research proposals that do not include all of the following elements may not be further considered for award.

1. Project Title
2. Project goals and objectives
3. Value of project to fishery conservation and management
4. Statement of work
 - a. Project design (Proposals involving field research must include, as applicable, the information requested in Section F, Exempted Fishing Permits)
 - b. Vessel, insurance and equipment needs, as applicable
 - c. Personnel
 - i. personnel resources already available (identify persons involved in the development of the proposal)
 - ii. industry participation (letters of interest from potential industry participants)
5. List of equipment, facilities and infrastructure contributed by project participants or organizations.
6. Estimated timeline of project including: a) start date, b) milestones, and c) completion date including submission of deliverables. If the research is bound by seasonal availability of

resources, this must be stated and reflected in the timeline.

7. Expected products and specific deliverables (at a minimum, semi-annual progress reports will be required)
8. Estimated budget to conduct the project (include a breakdown of cost elements)
9. Contact information
10. Past Performance: Submit type of contract or grant, contract or number, award amount; primary point of contact for contract or grant administration; telephone and facsimile number; and e-mail address.
11. Supporting documentation relevant to proposed research: resumes, cooperative research agreements, contracts, etc.

F. EXEMPTED FISHING PERMITS:

Vessels conducting certain types of research may be required to obtain an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP). In order to assist NMFS in determining whether or not the proposed research would require an EFP, researchers need to fully address the following, as may be applicable:

1. Location and Time of Year (specific time of year and areas where fishing will occur e.g. coordinates, 10 minute squares, closed areas, include map if possible);
2. Gear Type (trawl including mesh size, pot, gillnet, dredge, acoustic gear including frequency and amplitude);
3. Fishing Effort (number of vessels, number of tows, length of tows, number of pots, duration of tended gear, sampling frequency, etc.);
4. Catch (estimated species composition and amount including directed catch, bycatch and discards);
5. Regulatory Exemptions (identify any known or potential regulatory exemptions that may be necessary in order to conduct the proposed research including exemptions from A or B days-at-sea (DAS), closed areas, closed seasons, minimum fish or mesh size, possession limits, etc.).

Anticipated exempted permits should be specified. In such situations, applicants are strongly urged to contact the Sustainable Fisheries Division at the NMFS Northeast Regional Office, 978-281-9331, in advance of proposal submission. Additionally, applicants may access Experimental Fishing Permit (EFP) application materials on the NMFS web pages

<http://www.nero.noaa.gov/ro/doc/600745.htm> or
<http://www.nero.noaa.gov/sfd/efpguid2005.pdf>.

G. OUTREACH MATERIALS:

The production of any outreach material generated as a result of the contract for research including, but not limited to, brochures, pamphlets, posters, newsletter articles, and videos shall be coordinated and approved by the NMFS Northeast Regional Office Outreach Program.

H. DATA FORMAT:

Successful applicants will be required to submit project results in electronic form in accordance with data collection protocols of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) and/or other data base formats as may be required by NMFS.

I. PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA:

A review panel convened by NMFS will evaluate proposals by assigning scores up to the maximum indicated for each of the following criteria. The final selecting decision shall be at the discretion of the selecting official, considering the type and scope of the research, the timing of research to be conducted, the geographical distribution of research activities and other Fisheries policy goals and objectives.

1. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of the proposed project: This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work or relevance to NOAA, Federal, regional, state, or local activities. Researchers should provide a clear definition of the problem, need, issue, or hypothesis to be addressed. The proposal should describe its relevance to the research priorities and detail how the data gathered from the research will be used to enhance the understanding of the fishery resource or contribute to the body of information on which management decisions are made. (25 points).
2. Technical or scientific merit: This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. The approach to be used, including description of fieldwork, theoretical studies, and laboratory analysis to support the proposed research, should be clearly specified. (25 points)
3. Collaborative value: This criterion assesses whether the research promotes collaboration between fishermen and scientists, including a strong research partnership that is highly likely to succeed and a high degree of pro-active participation by fishermen in the design and conduct of research. (20 points)
4. Project costs: This criterion evaluates the cost or price to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame. Cost-effectiveness of the project will be considered. Economic and budget projections should be quantified, to the extent possible. (20 points)
5. Qualifications and experience of project participants: This criterion assesses whether the applicant, and team members, possess the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. (5 points)
6. The past performance of offerors who have previously been awarded research contracts or

grants shall be a consideration for determining awards under this announcement. (5 points)

J. CLARIFICATIONS:

Questions or comments regarding proposed projects described in this notice should be submitted in writing to Michelle Morales via e-mail at Michelle.R.Morales@noaa.gov.